

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

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Justice Department Awards \$1 Million Grant to Louisiana
Money to Help in Community Reentry and Investigating Sexual Assault

(Baton Rouge) The United States Department of Justice has awarded the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections a \$1 million grant (\$998,646) as part of the *Protecting Inmates and Safeguarding Communities Discretionary Grant Program*. The program is part of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 and addresses the issues its title suggests: 1) Protecting Inmates and 2) Safeguarding Communities.

A considerable part of the grant (60%) will be spent on safeguarding communities by enhancing the Department's Reentry initiatives across the state. The Department wants to build upon the success of the New Orleans Probation and Parole reentry program model and establish similar programs in Baton Rouge and Shreveport. (50% of all offenders released annually from Louisiana institutions are from these three metropolitan areas.)

"The New Orleans reentry model has been successful at keeping inmates from returning to prison, which enhances public safety," explained DPS&C Secretary Richard L. Stalder.

"The grant will help us build upon CORe (Corrections Organized for Reentry) by working with offenders up to two years prior to their release to secure vital job training and life skills. These efforts are crucial to both lowering Louisiana's recidivism rate and saving money for the state."

Part of the CORe plan is to assist offenders in securing a driver's license, birth certificate and social security card and even helping them build a resume' prior to release, so that

they can immediately start to seek employment. Once under the supervision of Probation and Parole, officers work with offenders in helping them find housing, jobs and other services provided in the community to which they are returning. During the last year, there has been much more dialogue and collaboration between the institutions, Probation and Parole and the much needed service providers, who are key to successful reentry initiatives in Louisiana.

The *Protecting Inmates* component of the grant will provide the Department with an opportunity to more effectively prevent, investigate and prosecute incidents of institutional sexual assault by covering the costs of personnel, training, technical assistance and data collection. Training will cover both inmate on inmate incidents as well as staff on inmate incidents.

“The grant will allow us to enhance current education and training for both inmates and staff,” said Stalder. “Many of our employees will be involved, including classification managers, frontline correctional officers, mental health employees and medical staff.”

Until now, measuring institutional sexual assault has been spotty at best. Previous research has been conducted with limited population sizes and has depended on self-reporting. PREA will help standardize data collection so that we can truly determine the prevalence of sexual assault in our institutions nationwide and respond to any concerns.

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